DOE News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2005

NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:
Kathy Gatens 208-526-1058
Ethan Huffman, 208-526-0660

Idaho National Laboratory scientist securing highly enriched uranium abroad

For five years, Idaho National Laboratory senior scientist Igor Bolshinsky has assisted the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration in its efforts to recover and return Russian-origin highly enriched uranium to Russia. His support has resulted in the successful return of more than 100 kg (220 pounds) of Russian-origin highly enriched uranium (HEU) under the Russian Research Reactor Fuel Return Program (RRRFR), a key component of DOE's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI).

Bolshinsky led five of the last six missions that repatriated HEU to Russia -- returning 57 kg (125 pounds) of fresh uranium fuel from Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Libya, and Uzbekistan to Russia. The successful Uzbekistan mission and Bolshinsky's role were recently featured in a CBS 60 Minutes segment that examined the threat of proliferation of nuclear materials.

Last September, Bolshinsky and a team of DOE/NNSA experts provided technical support to a secret one-day operation that airlifted 11 kg (24 pounds) of highly enriched uranium fuel from Uzbekistan to a highly- secure facility in Russia for down-blending into low enriched uranium. This joint effort of the United States, the Russian Federation, the government of Uzbekistan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) marked the first time a representative of the media had been embedded in one of these highly secure operations. During the one-day operation, IAEA safeguards inspectors and DOE experts monitored the process of loading fuel into specially supplied Russian shipping containers.

He provided technical support for an August 2002 joint DOE-United States State Department mission that returned 48 kg (105 pounds) of HEU from a research reactor near Belgrade, Serbia, to Russia. In each of these instances, the fresh uranium was originally provided by the Soviet Union for Soviet-designed research reactors operating in those countries.

Bolshinsky also was a major contributor to the U.S. cooperation with Libya to eliminate its nuclear weapons programs.

"We are very proud of the work that Dr. Bolshinsky and his colleagues are doing to secure weapons of mass destruction materials," said INL Director John Grossenbacher. "This is a key example of how the lab's capabilities in reactor and fuel cycle technologies can help the nation meet its critically important nonproliferation objectives."

Early last year, Bolshinsky and his colleagues received high praise in a letter from Condoleeza Rice, then-National Security Advisor to the President, for their efforts to assist Libya in eliminating its nuclear weapons programs. NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks echoed his appreciation, recognizing Bolshinsky's important efforts to secure weapons of mass destruction materials, technology and expertise.

The mission of the RRRFR program is to repatriate to Russia nuclear fuels of Russian origin – both spent and fresh. This program is a key element in the GTRI that was launched by the Administration last year to secure and remove vulnerable nuclear and radiological materials throughout the world as expeditiously as possible.

Bolshinsky was born and educated in Ukraine. He received his Ph.D. in mining engineering in 1983 at the Institute of Complex Development of Mineral Resources, Russian Academy of Sciences. After immigrating to the United States in 1991, he joined Argonne National Laboratory, working on Russian projects, and later, the former ANL-West site, where he served as a project manager on the shutdown of the BN-350 Reactor in Russia. As part of the new INL, he serves as a senior scientist on assignment to DOE in Washington, D.C. In 1999, Bolshinsky was awarded U.S. citizenship.

-INL-

INL-05-018

News Release Archive